

The Labour Organiser

No. 187

JANUARY, 1937

Price 4d.

MONTH BY MONTH

TIMES CHANGE. Times change, and that Labour's problems also change from year to year is one of the fundamental truths we have never ceased to place before our readers. The dawn of 1937 finds Labour with a different problem from any which has confronted it before, and with no very clear leadership either to give it guidance. It is nothing new that differences on policy exist within the Party; that the Right wing and the Left wing seem poles asunder; or that the Party's forces are split in disposition almost as much as a football team, with this exception: that the football team is disposed for the purposes of co-operation—but with our team it almost seems the other way round, and that co-operation has been split for the purpose of division. Though times change our own differences seem to linger.

DO THOU LIKEWISE. Not a very optimistic note with which to begin the New Year, but we shall be fools not to record truthfully that which we observe, or to affect not to see problems and difficulties which stare us in the face. The Party in the country at the moment is discouraged and dissatisfied. So much so, and so evident is this fact, that we wonder that anybody has taken the trouble to deny it. A perception of this feeling, a realisation of its origin, and a unanimous attempt to get the Party together on an even keel are the necessities of the moment. Affected blindness won't help a bit. All Parties have suffered in this way. The Tory Party most of all. It is not, we believe, that the Labour Party is any less resilient than their opponents. The Party can recover from its passing

sickness if, instead of denying that the patient is ill, the doctors get together to prescribe the remedies. Why not light the lamp of Socialism again, hold it aloft and let us see a few practical and far-reaching proposals that might be carried in the first few months of Socialist power? Parliamentaryism is less important than practical propaganda if Labour is to get out of the rut, and sweep the country at the next election. Get out of the rut!

COMING EVENTS. This year is an important one from the election standpoint. Every third year the District Council Elections and Municipal Elections are accompanied by County Council Elections, Parish Council Elections and Metropolitan Borough Council Elections—so in 1937. And what prophet would care to venture a denial of the probability of a General Election shortly following the Coronation, and that there may be an attempt to repeat the trick of 1935? Well, there are no divisions of policy which affect any one of the five important classes of Local Government elections, and the General Election is not yet. All sections should unite to bring the Local Government contests to a triumphant issue as a prelude to the bigger issue of the General Election. In truth, it may be said, that a General Election victory would be much modified in effect if there were no more triumphs to record in the Local Government Elections, and if Labour remains where it is in its representation on these bodies. Too little is it realised how much sympathetic administration can affect Labour legislation, or how vital it is that the great Local Government

machine should be captured and worked by trained Labour hands and brains as an indispensable concomitant to definite Socialist change. This will be a busy year.

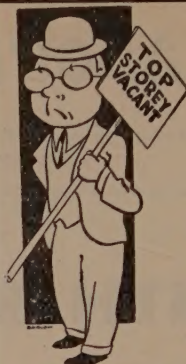
We have lately received frequent requests for standard account books, receipt forms and members' registers, and we have several times been urged to supply these requisites. To our many friends who have enquired for these things we must express our regrets at being unable to supply. The reason is that there is no demand as would justify the high costs of special printing. Labour Parties in the main only require very simple account books, and these are purchasable from every good class stationer. Some of our friends think that standard books might improve the book-keeping of the Party, and while we heartily concur in this we are nevertheless unable to incur the loss which would be incurred by an attempt to cater for the need. The collectors' books supplied by the "Labour Organiser" have, however, proved an immense success from the commencement. Many thousands are in use, and our orders, particularly at this time of year, are numerous and come from every quarter of the country. Thanks!

ALTERATION OF ADDRESS.

Will readers please note that owing to the sale of the premises our publishing office at 107 Dale End, Birmingham, will be closed in a few days. All communications for the "Labour Organiser" should be addressed to the Editor, Mr. H. Drinkwater, Fernhill Heath, near Worcester. Our new office address will be announced in due course.

MARRIAGE.

The marriage took place on 19th December at Droitwich, Worcestershire, of Miss Marian Drinkwater (Dad's sweetheart) and Mr. Leonard Allen Williams, of Witbourne, Knightwick, Worcestershire. The happy pair will reside near Worcester.



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MEMBERSHIP

The Big Figure Parties respond to an L.O. invitation to tell how they do it.

WOOLWICH

THE PREMIER PARTY SAYS : "MEMBERSHIP BRINGS MEMBERSHIP"

Is there anybody in the Labour Movement who has not read of the achievements of the Woolwich Labour Party? How, not so many years ago, this Party was loaded down with debt which it accepted on the closing down of the old Pioneer Printing Works, and how, under the able guidance of Coun. W. Barefoot, J.P., the premier Agent (President, Labour Agents' Union), and his able assistant, Miss Mabel Crout (the present Mayor of Woolwich), the Party buckled to its task and year by year built and consolidated the greatest Party membership in the country, even supplementing this with other wonderful efforts to clear the debt and make the Party locally supreme? Woolwich is now clear of its £4,000 debt, the final item of £353 having been cleared last year—an achievement by the women, who ran a Bazaar for this purpose.

But the following story tells us more. "Membership brings membership" has a moral for the weak as it has for the strong. And "Do you belong?" is a by-word in Woolwich. Others who envy may at least try to copy. Just think of that £4,000 odd which has been collected in membership subscriptions alone during the last six years!

Coun. W. Barefoot, J.P., writes:—

In the November, 1929, issue of the "Labour Organiser" I expressed the opinion that the two golden rules for successful membership were (1) regularity of call by collectors on members; (2) certainty that every member receives a notice of the monthly Ward meeting.

Seven years later our balance sheets prove the rules are "golden." They show an average of £690 per annum members' subscriptions since 1929. This, despite the removal of over 2,000 of our best members from our borough,

in addition to the usual lapses from which all Local Parties suffer.

During the seven years we have run one big membership campaign. But the enrolment of members goes on all the time. Membership brings membership. We now get an inflow of between 400 and 500 new members each year, partly through our collectors and partly by individual application to Central Office.

Our keen members are always on the look-out for new members, particularly our women. That is why we have had a 2,000 women membership. "Do you belong?" is now becoming a common question by our stalwart Party members, as it used to be in the old days in building the trade union movement.

This is not to say that we in Woolwich are satisfied. One in eight Labour voters as individual members is fairly good but not good enough. We should have at least one in four.

It is the individual membership which builds our political organisation by hard, solid work in the Wards, and regularity of contact which creates the comradeship which knows no defeat.

There is no royal road to the million individual membership we all desire for our great Party. But in the constituencies we can do our bit towards it by adding member to member to our list, and, by regularity of contact, keeping them.

THE CHAMPIONS ARE HERE SUNDERLAND SAYS

"HAND-PICKED FRUIT IS BEST"

Nine years ago, the Sunderland T.C. and L.P. paid the Head Office £3 in affiliation fees. Its affiliation fee for last year was in the neighbourhood of £50. From the minimum membership it has jumped up to about three thousand. "How" and "why" interested us, and Alderman George Ford,

J.P., the able Secretary and Agent, in response to our request, sends us the following account of the Party's membership methods.

The ultimate strength and solidarity of the Movement will, I believe, largely depend upon success, or otherwise, in our efforts to recruit "Individuals" into Party membership.

In stating that fact I do not wish to despise the Trade Union affiliations which for years have been the foundations upon which the organisation of many Divisional and Local Parties have been built. But it is true that whilst we have profited by affiliation fees we have not succeeded in creating a sense of political consciousness amongst the members of the Trade Union organisations.

I believe that "hand picked fruit is the best," and in securing the individual you do more than merely get his penny, you rouse him to political consciousness.

Experience convinces me that a distinct "local" appeal is preferable to a national leaflet appeal, hence I always advocate the former—copy enclosed—in my recruiting campaigns.

We set out to tackle a Ward, say, of 5,000 voters. Along with the loud-speaker equipment and a dozen of the Ward Committee members who are prepared to distribute the appeal forms, we proceed into a street, and whilst one is addressing a message, explaining our presence in the street, the canvassers deliver the appeals and state that someone will call next day for them.

Don't overwork your workers. To deliver 500 is a good night's work and sufficient for two persons to collect next day.

Experience in all classes of Wards teaches us to expect a 10 per cent. return from our canvass. Forms are then tabulated by Ward Committee Secretary in whose area we are working and names and addresses entered in "L.O." collecting books.

Collectors pay in to their Ward Committee Secretaries each week, and the latter in turn pay in to Party Treasurer once per month. Rebate of 37½ per cent. is allowed on collections—this can be retained by the collector or divided with the Ward Committee as may be agreed between Secretary and Collector. I am satisfied to get 12s. 6d. out of each £1 collected.

There is certain to be a wastage of members taking place in each Ward, and it is therefore essential that regular campaigns should be undertaken to make good losses and if possible to effect an increase in each Ward.

Difficulties are many, but should not daunt. Collectors tire, so do we all. It is no easy job to go round every week and collect pennies for the Party. You don't get the headlines in the Sunday newspapers that way. The comrades who faithfully do it deserve more than an inscription "To the Unknown Warrior."

They are entitled to the grateful thanks of the Movement.

May they never grow weary in 1937.

ALTRINCHAM ADVOCATES DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING

2,600 added membership in 4 years.

Altrincham is a County Division, and not quite the easiest type at that. It is largely residential, and it has a huge electorate. But in four years it has increased its membership fourteen times over. What the Honorary Secretary, Mr. H. C. Wade, has to say about the matter is therefore of special interest. This is a case where repeated and orthodox methods have proved eminently successful.

December, 1932, 200 members, 3 branches. December, 1936, 2,800 members, 8 branches.

Altrincham possessed in 1932 three tiny branches of the Labour Party and was an enormous, scattered, middle class Division; it has now over 100,000 electors.

Two or three enthusiastic workers decided on a membership campaign, distributed a special leaflet, following same up a few days later. Nearly 100 new members were obtained.

Since that time (the middle of 1933) similar campaigns have been carried on all over the Division with an increasing number of helpers. Special leaflets for each area are always used. Socialist literature is offered when calling back for the leaflet.

Last year for the first time we organised a membership campaign to go on all over the Division during May. Over 600 new members were obtained; 15,000 houses were visited.

Poor results? I have said this is a middle class Division. People seem to be afraid of their neighbours.

We shall obtain another 600 members when we repeat the experiment, covering the same ground, and the election value is enormous. In 1933 we polled 8,333 votes. On November 14th, 1935, we polled 21,493.

Door-to-door canvassing for members is one of the hardest jobs I know, but it is not unpleasant. We have tried many other ways to obtain members, easier to work. There is only one way to get a large membership—**DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING.**

A factor in *keeping* our members is that the bulk of the sub-collectors are paid.

4 TIPS FROM SUCCESSFUL SOUTHAMPTON

Nine years ago the Southampton Labour Party paid the sum of £5 as a year's affiliation to Head Office. To-day twelve times that sum is needed to discharge this Party's liability for membership cards. Southampton's story is a brilliant page in our Party's history. Mr. A. Rose, whose name is familiar to our readers, gives in the following account some hints worth noting. In particular, note what he says about finding helpers and keeping them—a question of equal importance to finding members and keeping them.

One of the primary essentials of success in building membership is that there should be a band of willing helpers who will devote themselves to the task.

In Southampton I have been fortunate, for we have a splendid band who are deserving of the highest praise for their self-sacrificing efforts in this branch of our work. In saying this, I can hear a number of small Parties saying "Ah, we could make great strides if only we had the helpers. But we can't get them."

Well, Southampton had to start in precisely the same way as any other small Party; the helpers had to be found and encouraged, *and, most important*, not smothered out of existence with dozens of different jobs.

I emphasise this point because I know that a good many willing members have had their enthusiasm killed by being overloaded at the start.

We recognised that we could not do everything at once, and decided on first things first. And the first thing was membership.

In asking members to undertake positions as collectors or membership secretaries, we tried to make that their primary job, and other work must not interfere with it.

Our membership made its biggest jump when we took membership work out of the hands of already overburdened secretaries, and placed it in the hands of members who made it their *principal* job. In this brief statement I would summarise the reasons for our own growth as follows:

- (1) Specialised work (as explained above).
- (2) Making contribution collection routine work, i.e., regular fixed days for paying in, etc.
- (3) Creating a wide interest in membership development.
- (4) Systematic work on known supporters, inviting them to join.

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THE STORY RUNS ON—

**WITH ADDED INTEREST—
YOU WILL LIKE TO READ OF
DICK TURPIN, SMUGGLERS,
THE DUTCH, THE IRISH,
AND—**

3,244 MEMBERS

The Whitechapel and St. George's Division can truly be described as unique both from the point of view of situation and general make-up.

It adjoins the City of London, contains the Royal Mint and the Tower of London, and, by way of contrast, some of Britain's worst slums. Nearly 40 per cent. of its total population is living in slum or overcrowded conditions.

On its riverside it handles precious commodities, such as ivory and Persian carpets; but the local people are among the poorest of the poor.

The district is rich in local history. One of its local inns served as the headquarters of Dick Turpin, and also marks the starting-point of his famous ride to York. Another is reputed to have been the scene of the capture of the infamous Judge Jefferies, who was waiting in disguise for the ship that was to bear him safely away. During recent years excavation works have brought to light many skeletons, some of which were still carrying the chains and spikes. Cellars have also been found which were leading down to the riverside, relics no doubt, of the days of smuggling.

Its population is for the most part made up of the descendants of people who have sought refuge in England from the persecution in their native lands. Many Russian Jews fleeing from Czarist Russia found asylum in Whitechapel; the Huguenots from France found a home in Spitalfields. Added to this, there are descendants of the large Dutch colony that settled in the area and which came for purposes of trade. On the other side of the Division is a large Irish population, which settled in the district following the Irish famine.

Interspersed with all these are to be found Germans, Lithuanians and coloured peoples from many lands. It is a tribute to our Whitechapel and St. George's comrades that they have

by work and propaganda united these many peoples behind a single political ideal.

Mr. Morgan Phillips writes:—

The Whitechapel and St. George's Division has a parliamentary electorate of 38,100. The Labour vote in the last General Election was 13,374, when Labour regained the seat with a majority of 2,281 over the Liberal opponent. This success meant that the Division could for the first time claim 100 per cent. Labour representation. There are ten Wards, and each is represented on the Borough Council by three Labour Councillors, and two members of our Party sit for the Division on the London County Council.

In July of last year the Party decided to organise a membership campaign throughout the area. A special eight-page edition of the Party paper, "The Gazette," was issued and dealt mainly with the twin evils of Fascism and War. These were distributed in each street while a short meeting was in progress, in which our loud-speaker equipment was fully employed.

Each distributor was accompanied by a canvasser whose task it was to enrol all sympathisers into the Party. Where a promise was received that consideration would be given to our appeal for recruits a prepaid postcard was left at the house. Sometimes as many as four or five streets were covered in the course of one evening and this work continued throughout the month of July, during which time we covered nearly 75 per cent. of the Division.

On Sunday, July 12th, we organised a march through the Division to an anti-fascist demonstration in Victoria Park, Bethnal Green. We concluded our campaign with a Sunday afternoon demonstration against the Means Test, which we held on Tower Hill, when nearly 3,000 people attended. Nearly 1,000 new members were enrolled to reward us for our efforts.

We naturally suffer considerably from fluctuations in membership on account of the fact that nearly 40 acres of our territory is scheduled under the slum clearance schemes of the L.C.C. and is being, or soon will be, demolished.

When new blocks of flats are erected they are made the subject of a special canvass, when the opportunity is taken of emphasising the great value of of Labour's constructive municipal programme, and in each case the response is highly gratifying. Our membership figures speak for themselves—1934, 2,093; 1935, 2,309; 1936, 3,244. In 1937 we hope to add at least another 256 members and thus obtain the record membership of 3,500. Our local ambition is to obtain for our Party one member for every three parliamentary votes given to our candidate in the last election.

LABOUR'S WAISTCOAT POCKET

CAMBERWELL (North)

**COLLECTS £300 A YEAR—DEAL-
ING WITH OUT-OF-WORKS**

In response to our request for information regarding the membership income in Camberwell North, Councilor C. A. G. Manning, D.L., J.P., sends us the notes below. Mr. Manning's experience in Camberwell North is almost unique. Time was when a powerful Union financed this constituency, but the Trades Dispute Act changed all that. Nine or ten years ago the constituency paid the minimum affiliation fee to Head Office—to-day it pays on a powerful membership of between two and three thousand. Envisaging the changes which must have taken place, both in the outlook and the make-up of the Party, we congratulate both them and Mr. Manning, whose experience in this respect as we have hinted, stands almost alone.

The Editor has asked me for a few words telling you "How it is done." Alas, and alack, the North Camberwell membership position is not quite as good as it might be.

Deaths, removals (we are a working class dormitory constituency in a divided borough of four constituencies, from which one-sixth of the electorate moves out to new estates each year) and lapses leave us in the position that in the eighteen years of our existence our present membership strength is but one-third of what it would have been if those who came in never went out!

We employ a collector. He calls on every member every week (or every

month) as the member desires. Contributions have been on the penny per week basis for a long time and our rule is no contribution, no membership. If a member falls out of work we drop the contribution to 1d. a month, the annual minimum.

For 1935 our penny a week contributions amounted to £317 2s. 6d.; for 1936, £295 3s. od. It's bad, brothers, bad.

Not many people can follow our exact methods for the reason that we are a "waistcoat-pocket" constituency, and IT IS TRUE TO SAY THAT WE ARE IN DAY-TO-DAY TOUCH with the electorate, who bring to us all their cares and worries, and a team of lawyers and J.P.'s are in frequent attendance for the purpose of helping them.

In other ways we try to be the one vital organisation in the division . . . but I have exceeded my quota of words . . . I always do!

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OLDHAM ALSO.

**HERE THERE ARE 3,700 MEMBERS
A BIG JOB WELL DONE**

Mr. Arnold Tweeddale writes:—

3,700 membership—a position that has been maintained for this last six years. A very difficult task, for during the last four years the total of our lapsed membership has totalled over 3,000. This is due to various causes, such as: unemployment, Ward differences, dissatisfaction with Party policy, removals and, in many cases, bad collecting.

It will therefore be recognised that, to maintain our membership a continual and systematic canvass has had to be undertaken and various methods adopted during a twelve months' time. In all the following schemes circulars are first of all distributed and then followed up:—

1. Immediately after the elections those persons who left their Poll Cards in the Committee Rooms are visited.
2. Lapsed members are periodically visited with a view to them re-joining the Party.
3. Women whose husbands are members are approached to join.
4. During the summer months a central canvassing team is in operation, which visits one Ward per week with a view to canvassing those people who pledged for us, and in some cases canvassing a selected area house to house. This scheme has proved very successful during the two years it has been in operation. Loud-speakers are very useful for the purpose of holding meetings in the area that is being canvassed to urge on the electors the necessity of joining.

LABOUR

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JANUARY

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OUR MIND-METER

Below are to be found a number of statements all of which have been made in our hearing within the last few weeks. Each statement contains some inaccuracy or is founded upon a wrong assumption of fact. As a test to your knowledge set down in a few words what is wrong with each statement, then compare with our comments on page 11.

1. It is a good thing that the Local Government Act (1933) allows candidates the same free use of schoolrooms as is allowed to Parliamentary candidates. We have always been refused the use of a room in the ——— Grammar School, but we shall now be able to get it without payment.
2. It is a scandal that Head Office always gives monied candidates the choice of the best seats.
3. I used the form of election return (at the Municipal Elections) supplied me by the Town Clerk, for if I had not done so he would have refused to have accepted my accounts.
4. The Labour Movement is behind the times. Why don't the leaders set up correspondence courses for the benefit of those who cannot attend lectures in London and other centres?
5. Our D.L.P. has the right by law to two free copies of the register, and our Secretary should go and demand them.
6. A—— having received Public Assistance during the past year will be unable to stand for the County Council. We shall, however, put him up for the Urban District Council.
7. B——, who is the Chairman of the Conservative Association in our district, is going abroad in March. I hear that he is arranging for his father to vote for him in his absence.
8. What can you expect of a National Executive Committee which contains such men as Walter Citrine and the rest of the T.U.C. crowd?

*A sample Membership Circular.*ALTRINCHAM DIVISIONAL LABOUR PARTY.
WYTHENSHAW BRANCH.

PRESIDENT: A. KNIGHT.

HON. PROPAGANDA SECRETARY: W. SNELSON.

HEADQUARTERS:

SHARSTON MANOR,
ALTRINCHAM ROAD,
WYTHENSHAW.

May 1st, 1936.

The local branch of the Labour Party extends an invitation to you to become a member.

Recent developments in the political and economic life of the country have shown more than ever before the need for a powerful working class organisation if freedom and security are to be obtained for the workers, and Peace for the world.

SOCIALISM—with its doctrine of world brotherhood will not tolerate even the thought of war; capitalism, monopolies, imperialism, these are the fundamental causes of war—remove these—and you will safeguard Peace. **SOCIALISM ENSURES PEACE.**

In the economic life of the country capitalism denies the right of the worker to a fair share of the wealth he produces by labour of hand or brain, and, by selfish motives and lack of organisation is the definite cause of unemployment.

SOCIALISM—means public ownership and control of the means of production and ensures a constantly improving standard of living for all workers. **UNEMPLOYMENT IS IMPOSSIBLE IN A SOCIALIST COMMUNITY.**

There are over 2,000 individual members of the Labour Party in the Altrincham Division. That is good, but not good enough; 2,000 more members are wanted at once.

THIS IS AN APPEAL TO YOU.

Do YOU want to ensure for yourself and your children

PEACE FREEDOM AND SECURITY?

If you do—YOU SHOULD BE A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

The Labour Party is your strongest hope of world peace.

At the foot of this sheet is an application for membership form. Membership is open to all who accept the rules and policy of the party and who are prepared to pay a minimum subscription of 1d. per week.

It is not sufficient to merely VOTE LABOUR, become a member and **HELP LABOUR.**

One of our members will call on you next week, and will appreciate a courteous reception. If you are out when he calls you can become a member by signing the form and sending it to the above address.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

Name (State Mr., Mrs., or Miss)

Address

.....

OUR MIND-METER

(See page 9)

1. Use of Schoolrooms. This statement is inaccurate. The "free use" of a room in a school at an election applies only to public elementary schools. The Act does not apply to the secondary school in question. The same limitation on the class of school which he is entitled to use applies to a candidate at a Parliamentary Election. A returning officer, however, may, for the purpose of taking the poll or counting the votes, use a room in a school in receipt of a grant, or in respect of which a grant is made out of monies provided by Parliament, from or by the Board of Education, or a room, the expense of maintaining which is payable out of the rates.

2. Monied Candidates. This statement is not quite fair. Candidates, monied or otherwise, are not selected by the Head Office, who, in point of fact, have far less influence than is imagined in the placing of candidates. A choice of seats is virtually impossible for anybody unless it be the limited sort of choice which a distinguished candidate may get as between several constituencies which apply to him to stand—and the Party E.C. don't come into this picture very much. Nowadays Parties in the "best seats" generally know how to look after their own interests. Few of them would take kindly to "Head Office" trying to plant a monied candidate or any other. In actual practice, any blame in this matter lies in a different direction altogether.

3. Election Return. The person who made this statement is mistaken as to the powers of the Town Clerk. The return of election expenses required in certain elections (i.e., Parliamentary, County Council, and Borough Council Elections) is provided for by the Municipal Elections (Corrupt Illegal Practices) Act, 1884. No special form is prescribed by that Act, and where a form is supplied by the officer to whom the return should be sent, such form is supplied for convenience only, and its use is not obligatory. Further, the Act named gives the officer to whom the return should be made no power

of scrutiny or rejection, nor in any statement of expenses incurred does the existence of slight errors and omissions prevent it being a "return" sent within the prescribed time (*Mackinnon v. Clark*). The functions of the Receiving Officer are limited to keeping the return at his office and allowing inspection or copies of same, under the prescribed regulations. In a Parliamentary Election a summary of the return must be published.

4. Correspondence Courses. Our friend here is hopelessly at sea, and the amusing thing was that, there was nobody at the meeting at which this statement was made, appeared to know better. In the first place, the Labour Party itself does run Correspondence Courses, though these are limited to matters of Party organisation, Election Law, etc. The National Council of Labour Colleges also run a numerous series of postal courses, not only on economic questions, but on English, Local Government, Public Speaking, Socialism, Chairmanship, Finance, Esperanto, etc.

5. Free Copies of Register. Not quite like this, my friends. There is no right vested in a Local Party to free copies of the Register. As a matter of grace, two free copies are supplied to the "recognised agents" of political parties. The regulations do not envisage supplying political parties, but the officers of political parties may secure a sort of qualification by doing registration work, and claiming through this to be recognised agents for the purpose of registration.

6. Poor Law Relief. The Local Government Act, 1933, altered a position which our friend, who made this statement, seemed to have some inkling of. There was a time when the receipt of Poor Law Relief would not have disqualified for every kind of local governing body, but the Local Government Act, 1933, made the disqualification general, and no person who has within twelve months before the day of election (or since his election) received Poor Law Relief, is

qualified for being elected or remaining a member of a local authority.

7. About Proxies. There is ambiguity in this statement, if not error, though we suspect the latter. There is one way, and one way only, in which one person may vote for another, and that is when the voter appoints a proxy. The only persons, however, who may appoint proxies are persons on the Absent Voters' List. In order, therefore, for the circumstances to arise, which the statement contains, the son would need to be already on the Absent Voters' List. If he is not "on" he cannot apply to be placed on the List until next August; and he could not in any case secure the privilege during the currency of the present register. The Representation of the People Act, 1918, was amended in this matter by the Representation of the People (No. 2) Act, 1920. Under the latter Act, any person whose name is entered on the Absent Voters' List, and who makes a statement in the prescribed form that there is a probability that he will at the time of a

Parliamentary Election be at sea, or out of the United Kingdom, and satisfies the Registration Office as to the bona fides of such statement, shall be entitled, if he so desires, to appoint a proxy.

8. Citron for Citrine. Naughty! Naughty! Unfortunately this statement is typical of a general ignorance concerning the composition of the National Executive. If members make these blunders, what can be said of the general public, and even pressmen, who will confuse things? Neither Sir Walter Citrine, nor any other member of the General Council of the T.U.C., is a member of the National Executive of the Party. The Labour Party Constitution (which may be found by anybody in the Annual Report of the Labour Party), definitely lays down (Standing Order IV. (3)) that "Members of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress are not eligible for nomination to the National Executive Committee. Whatever may be the influence of Sir Walter Citrine and others, we must get our facts right.

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NEWS. NOTES. NOTIONS

Someone asked us recently for a recipe for good business meetings. Knowing something of the meetings of that Party, we prescribed four things—light, warmth, optimism and brevity. Please think that over. Is your meeting held in a dark, musty and dingy room? Are your meetings held in the cold, or hovered round a poor stove with not even the warmth of congeniality to improve matters? Is there an everlasting dirge at the meetings, and does each one seem like the knell of passing day? And do your meetings drag on and hang out till everybody is sick and sorry that they came? Again, please think the matter over. It is unfortunate that most Parties are short of one at least of those factors which go to make good meetings.

Has your Party made any special plans in view of the Coronation? This event will most certainly cut into ordinary Party working and propaganda for at least three weeks. Has the matter of keeping members interested in the Party been thought of? In view of the fact that some propaganda will certainly be interrupted, and that this is an election year, is there not something to be said for a little extra concentration before the light nights are here?

Social effort seems to us to have a special advantage in the present position of the Party. It keeps folk together. And folk who are together during the winter months will not drift far apart in the summer. Indeed, in the present stage of the Party we believe that social events are of greater importance than heretofore. The years of leanness are ahead, but the years of plenty are with us, so far, at any rate, as they can be with us under a capitalist system. Wages are going up, so is employment, albeit it is mostly in the ghastly cause of destruction. But at such times membership ought to boom, and certainly social functions become easier to organise. There were Parties who almost forgot how to do these things during the recent dreadful period of unemployment, but even these ought to make hay while the sun shines. There are

three months yet of dark evenings and golden opportunity. If these are taken advantage of we assuredly shall be in a stronger position to face the summer and the later shock of elections.

Has it ever struck you that the new Housing Estates are full of lonely people? That to feel a stranger in a strange land is the lot of lots who inhabit the new estates—the newer the more so. After all, the people in all these places have mostly torn up their roots from areas where social life has been developed for one, two, three or more generations. In the areas that they came from chapels, halls and social circles compete for their interest. All this is changed in the new housing estates. Houses are further apart. Halls and centres are few or non-existent. The pedigree of families is not known; there is an

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inferiority complex amongst the housewives which makes it necessary to give some little vain display to impress neighbours that one is, after all, at home in these newer and better surroundings. Often, too, there is the silent suffering which striving to live beyond one's income entails. Anyway, in lots of these places there is yearning for understanding, compassion and comradeship. Which of my readers will canvass intelligently and understandingly the nearest estate to your home, and lead the lonely ones into the light and enjoyment of a live Local Party?

Brave heart! Our readers will be interested to know that Frank Smith, Keir Hardie's colleague-in-arms, and the former M.P. for Nuneaton, recently interviewed another Divisional Labour Party with a view to selection—we are not permitted to say where. This may be the day of young men, but the older ones are not done yet, and we will wager that Frank Smith would put up as bonnie and inspiring a fight as most men less than half his age. Good luck to a tireless fighter. Long may he live.

Have you got a man in your Party who has the register complex? It is astonishing how many Local Parties entirely neglect work upon the register of electors—except at election times. Yet the register should be the basis of all organisation. Careful and detailed attention to its correction gives the Party an immense lead in any election, and the register ought to serve at all times as a sort of larder from which to get information on which Party membership and strength may be built up. Some men have a happy knack and a special flair for handling registers. Is there no man (or woman) in your Party with an inclination for this sort of thing, and is there nobody in your Party who will undertake the daily care which would mean so much?

This year May Day fortunately falls upon a Saturday. As the Coronation falls twelve days later, and there will be precious little evidence of Socialist sentiment in the festivities connected with that event, would it not be wise this year to take advantage of the happy fact that May Day comes first, and that it falls upon the best day? The speakers must be booked now.

Year after year, despite this advice, we ourselves receive applications right up to a few days before the event appealing for speakers, who, of course, cannot be obtained for the simple reason that they are already booked up. Book now, to avoid disappointment.

THAT LABOUR MONTHLY

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"SUNDERLAND LABOUR NEWS."

George Ford, Secretary and Agent to Sunderland D.L.P., writes: I notice in your December issue you comment on the "Sunderland Labour News," and state it is run in co-operation with the Ripley Printing Society Ltd. This is not strictly correct. Our contract is with the Archway Advertising Services Ltd., of 10A, Archway Road, London, N.19.

This firm is, we understand, of great service to Parties owning their own periodicals, and correspondence from Local Parties desirous of establishing local papers is invited.

HINTS ON THE COMING ELECTIONS

(From a circular instruction issued by The Labour Party)

General

A challenging clear-cut policy against reaction must be the keynote of local electioneering by Labour Parties. If the opposition makes a fuss about the introduction of party politics into local elections, count it as a tribute to the virility of Labour—Conservative politics are there all the time.

It can generally be assumed that eight days' public canvassing and electioneering will more than coincide with active public interest: the prior time should therefore be devoted to detailed preparation for the campaign.

The candidate will be well advised to call on electors in this prior period and make himself known. A public meeting which is timed to secure press publicity will be a good preliminary in starting comment and interest. A correspondence on election matters in the local press would also be advantageous.

A consultation of local speakers and candidates should be fixed, to talk over points which ought to be made in the election.

There is no statutory office of election agent for local elections. It is, however, the custom to appoint an election clerk to be responsible for the conduct of the election. It is not wise for a candidate to undertake the duties.

First Duties

Get photo block of the candidate made for the address, and a small one for varied use.

Attend to the preparation and printing of candidate's address and any special leaflets.

Get the address in hand as quickly as possible. There is generally a tendency to procrastinate: but lateness often spoils a contest.

Start addressing envelopes. Choose a size for easy folding of the address.

Secure copies of the Register. Complete and check two or three nomination papers.

Get candidate's written consent to nomination. Issue collecting cards for funds.

Follow-on Duties

Book committee rooms. Arrange for meetings. Prepare poll cards.

Draft and order posters and leaflets. Meet election workers.

Arrange for early delivery of nomination papers to Returning Officer.

Distribute addresses and poll cards to voters. Organise canvass of electors.

Organise mass canvassing and street meetings. Appoint personation and counting agents.

Prepare for polling day organisation: cars, messengers, checkers, helpers for fetching up, material for committee rooms.

Envelope Addressing and Filling

The organisation of this work must be precise and orderly, or confusion will arise. Someone must be in definite charge of the work. Record sheets must be prepared beforehand, and the Register which is to be split up into sheets for the writers should be first boldly numbered with coloured crayon, and a different colour should be used for each polling district.

For home writers, bundles of 200-500 envelopes and pages of the Register should be prepared, and an accurate check kept on this outside work so that no duplication of effort occurs.

As well as the name and address of the elector, the poll letter and number might be put on the envelope. Give clear instructions to writers as to the *Local Government* electors only being addressed.

The folding and filling arrangements must be orderly. Someone must keep an eye on the supplies for the tables or homefillers. The completed lots must be tied up in suitable bundles for delivery.

If poll cards are used, the insertion of these must be a separate and special job. The appropriate card must be put in the same numbered envelope, and frequent checking must be kept up through the task. Wretched confusion has arisen in elections through mistakes over poll cards.

Meetings

Public meetings are forbidden on licensed premises or places where refreshments are ordinarily sold for consumption on the premises, except in Rural District and Parish elections.

Indoor meetings should be carefully organised and well advertised. The date should be fixed with relation to getting press reports.

Personal canvassing with leaflets should be part of the organisation of a meeting. It cannot be expected that leaflets convening a meeting will of themselves bring adequate attendance. Interest must be aroused. Too many local election meetings are thinly attended. Display a poster at the entrance to the hall beforehand.

Committee Rooms

No committee rooms may be fixed on licensed premises, or where food and drink is ordinarily sold for consumption on the premises unless the premises have a separate entrance and no direct communication with the other part.

Endeavour to secure a committee room near to each polling station, especially for polling day itself. The outside and inside of committee rooms should be made bright and orderly. An attractive display of posters and bills should be arranged for, if possible.

Canvass

This is the most essential and important work of the election. The election clerk must know where his Labour supporters are, so that on election day they can be polled.

If 1,200 votes are needed for a win, then obviously the task is set. An attempt must be made to secure about 1,800 promises. Then the workers can concentrate on these promises on polling day.

Talk plainly to the election workers. Tell them they have only to go in pairs to houses and hand in a leaflet and invite the people to read the candidate's address or come to his meetings. This, coupled with a remark that it is hoped the people will give their support to Labour, will produce an indication of sentiments of the voter that will enable the canvass card to be marked. Of course, the canvassers will make some errors, but they will collect a substantial record of "favourables," which makes the task for polling day surer and potent for mobilising the best available vote, which may mean victory. If this canvass is not done, then everybody in the election is merely working blindly at the electorate and hoping for the best, which does not usually come.

If canvass cards are not available, paste the pages of the Register on cards. These can be ordered, cut to size, from a printer. Canvass cards can be obtained from Head Office at 3s. 6d. per 1,000 (including twenty-five covers and pins).

Mass Canvass or Street Meetings

Mass canvassing is really an intimate form of street meeting. It is appropriate and effective in some districts, creating interest and building up the vote.

A group of helpers go into a street and call at the houses and invite women to come to their doors to hear the candidate or a speaker. Ringing a handbell is useful in arousing attention. The candidate or speaker in a very few words reminds the people of the date of the election, and asks them to vote for Labour. Invariably, the women come to the doors or listen behind the windows. Meanwhile, leaflets are distributed.

Mass canvassing in the evening has been tried and found useful. People listen behind the curtains, and the reminder of the election and the date stimulates interest and talk about Labour.

Personal Visiting by the Candidate

Some candidates have won elections on their personal visits. A candidate with a friend or friends can call at a considerable number of houses in the course of an hour or two per day. Just a greeting and a request to read his address or come to his meeting suffices to give a pleasant impression, gets Labour and the election talked about and, what is important, induces more people to vote for Labour. Let it be said, all candidates ought to take the trouble to call on electors.

Polling Day

Before polling day, the committee room clerk should have got all "favourables" canvass cards in street order in boxes. If a Register has been used for canvassing, all the favourables should have been entered on small cards with polling number; this makes a simple and most effective system for polling day and does away with wall sheets.

In either case there are the cards of supporters. As the runners bring in information as to the polling, the polled "favourables" are withdrawn

(Continued on page 20.)

JACK CUTTER on

YOUTH, LOUDSPEAKERS, ELECTIONS AND PLANS

The Party's urge for a Youth Membership Effort has come at the appropriate time and will have the backing of every alert Agent as a counterblast to some of the nonsense which has recently been heard about the Party's so-called "betrayal of youth."

We have been asked to believe by a very vocal section that because Conference agreed to step-down the League of Youth age limit by four years from 25 to 21, the League will cease to exist and we will lose the services, support and membership of all our youth.

"A youth of 21," they say, "is not yet sufficiently matured to take an interest in the general Movement, and, losing the influence of the League, will just drift away or join some other movement." I have heard this precious nonsense seriously argued on a number of occasions.

Are our Socialist youths so molly-coddles? Is their Socialism so feeble that it needs to be wet-nursed? Are their minds so vacillating that they cannot be trusted to do the right and logical thing—that is, to carry on the work they have begun and be glad of a wider sphere of endeavour? Perish the thought!

It is supposed to be a sign of old-fogey-dom to start a comparison with the words: "Why, when I was that age . . ." but I will take the risk, not because I want to preach, but because it is not so very long ago, after all, and I believe our young Socialists are at least as good quality and as strong in the faith nowadays as we were then.

If any pompous ass had suggested to me that I was not sufficiently "matured" to know my own mind at 21, when I was an I.L.P. Branch Secretary, Assistant Secretary of a Trades Council, and a push-bike propagandist over five Parliamentary Divisions, I imagine I would have been too amused to be annoyed.

Every argument I have heard against the reduction of the age limit has been based on assumptions which are insults to the intelligence and spirit of the young members concerned. Our youth should resent the implication that they are a week-kneed lot, and

assert with vehemence that they, in their early twenties, are as capable of playing a real part in the Movement as the rest of us. Indeed, if, at that age, they have not a rooted conviction that they could do it a darn sight better, then there's something wrong with them!

I noticed during 1936 that several Boroughs passed bye-laws prohibiting the use of loud-speakers in the streets and the equipment obtained by the Labour Parties in these districts is lying about in cupboards, doing itself no good, with deteriorating batteries, and degenerating components. Which seems a pity when there are rural Divisions which could put a set to very good use, but cannot raise the price of a new one. Probably the advertisement of good second-hand sets in these columns would bring responses.

Whilst on the subject of loud-speakers, it is sad to observe a Party with a good set and no local ban on its use, keeping it lying about the office and using it only about once a month. In such cases the reason usually is that when they *have* used it they have used it improperly.

The old type of street-corner meeting lasting an hour and a half, with a Chairman and two speakers is an abomination if a loud-speaker is used all the time. People might stand fifteen minutes of it if they are very interested, but that is their limit. What holds a street corner crowd is the personality of the speaker, not the loudness of his voice, and a speaker with a personality can dispense with the loud-speaker altogether, or use it only for a few moments at the beginning of his speech.

The best way to use a loud-speaker is for a series of short, 15-minute meetings, with no Chairman and no questions. In fact, 10-minute speeches are better still.

And the best plan of all is to arrange a steady "circuit" with the Ward Associations so that they know just when the equipment will be at their disposal and can make their plans accordingly.

The following *modus operandi* strikes me as being a good idea, and I pass it on for your mental mastication and consequent adoption if you like it.

Point one. 1937 is a big year for local government. Besides the annual Borough Council and U.D.C. Elections there are C.C. and M.B.C. contests. Let us therefore take Local Government as the main theme of loud-speaker propaganda this year.

Point two. Use the monthly Council meeting as the starting-point in the month's propaganda. Classify the Wards. Wards with Labour Councils in Class A. Wards with a fighting chance or with candidates adopted, Class B. Difficult Wards, Class C. Draw up a plan on the following lines:—Suppose there are three Wards in each Class and the Council meeting is the first Tuesday in the month. In Class A are Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Wards; in Class B, Nos. 4, 5 and 6 Wards; and in Class C Nos. 7, 8 and 9 Wards.

1st Tues.
Council
Meeting
2nd Tues.
Ward 5
Cl. B

1st Wed.
Ward 1
Cl. A
2nd Wed.
Ward 6
Cl. B

1st. Thurs.
Ward 2
Cl. A
2nd Thurs.
Ward 7
Cl. C

1st Fri.
Ward 3
Cl. A
2nd Fri.
Ward 8
Cl. C

2nd Mon.
Ward 4
Cl. B
3rd Mon.
Ward 9
Cl. C

Point three. The Wards now know that they each have the loud-speaker once a month and on what date. In Class A Wards a Labour Councillor takes the mike around the Ward he represents, giving, in a series of short 10 or 15-minute speeches, an account of the important points in the Council meeting that week and an account of his own stewardship and the work of the Labour group, with a reference to general Party policy.

In Class B Wards the Labour candidate for the Ward does the same thing, except that he tells his future constituents how he would have handled this or that issue. If no Labour candidate is yet adopted for a Class B Ward, one of the Labour Councillors for a Class A Ward who is not on "rota duty" for his own Ward that month takes over.

And in Class C Wards budding candidates, Labour Aldermen or general propagandists can have their turn, boosting the Labour Group and showing the snobocracy what they are missing by not sending recruits to the Labour Group.

Point four. It is, of course, essential

to realise that there is only about an hour and a half each evening when a loud-speaker can be effectively used in the streets—between 6.45 and 8.15. If used later it becomes a nuisance to the residents whose kids are in bed. Ten-minute speeches are not easy to make, but a lot can be said in ten minutes, and if a brief speech is prepared by every speaker, cutting out unnecessary words so as to pack ten minutes with facts and points, the speeches will not only be worth listening to, but, allowing for travelling time from one street to another (five minutes between each speech should be ample) six points in the Ward can be covered in the evening's work, and six speeches in each ward once a month is a better propaganda effort than most Parties indulge in. It would soon have its effect.

However, there it is. Try it out with variations to suit your own circumstances and I will be interested to hear how it goes.

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Yours sincerely,

R. RADCLIFFE.

NOTES ON WARD ORGANISATIONS.

By Councillor W. J. THROUP,
Agent, Nelson and Colne.

(The writer of the following article has been one of the most consistently successful Labour agents in the country. Mr. Throup possesses the happy knack of passing his knowledge and enthusiasm on to others, and some of his pupils in other parts of the country have been as successful as himself. The membership of the Nelson and Colne Divisional Labour Party is in the neighbourhood of 3,000.)

PART I.

Despite the set-back that was administered to the Labour Party at the last General Election, there are definite signs that the movement is emerging from that cloudy pessimism which is generally evoked by a crushing defeat.

This is all to the good. It indicates that many of the workers have already fully appreciated what is meant by a "National Government," they have tasted anew the bitter fruits of National victory, and in their hour of misery and misfortune they are looking to the Labour Party for hope and inspiration which is the main-spring of activity.

It is of vital importance that every advantage should be taken of the changed conditions. We cannot afford to wait until time is clearly on our side. The time to build anew is now. Steps must be taken to rebuild the movement on a firmer foundation.

How Can This Be Done?

The answer is perfectly clear:—

(1) By harnessing more effectively our potential and active support in Ward and Polling District Committees.

(2) By securing an improved technique in the conduct of Elections.

Speaking generally, it is true to say that our ward machinery has been haphazard in the past. We have lacked method. A scratch machine improvised on the threshold of an election can never yield the best results. Elections are fought to-day with an intensity unknown in the past, and the agent who is unprepared is surely inviting defeat.

The work in the wards has been done by a limited numbers of workers. A

few brave souls have undertaken the almost superhuman task of keeping things alive year in and year out, and very often finally giving up in sheer despair.

It is true to say that a large number of good workers pass from active to passive support of the movement owing to the multifarious jobs that are imposed upon them. There is a limit to what can be done by any individual, and to be urged to take additional duties will assuredly result in diminished efficiency.

There is the rapture of real joy when a piece of work has been carried through with the maximum of efficiency. You feel right on the top of your job, and under such circumstances work is a real pleasure.

The obvious problem confronting the agent who is anxious to do his job thoroughly is to widen the responsibility of his ward organisation. More workers must be brought within the ambit of the ward machine, and those who are willing and capable of undertaking the task of keeping the ward truly alive must be trained to do their job.

In this work of re-organisation the agent must not worry about the croakers. They are to be found everywhere. They will quickly remind him that they never did this or that in the past, that they always got through without these new-fangled notions of organisation, and that the best thing to do is to leave things alone. If they had their way the world could be re-organised in twenty-four hours, yet if the agent suggested any innovation in ward organisation they shudder.

The agent, however, if he is wise, will treat them with tact and good humour, for even a croaker has been known to give partial assent to what he disdainfully designed as drawing-room organisation.

Membership Campaign.

The membership campaign if effectively undertaken will provide the agent with an excellent opportunity for re-building his ward organisation. Many new members will have been enrolled, and no effort should be spared to bring as many as possible into direct contact with the work of the party.

How Is This To Be Done?

The best course for the agent to take is to have a talk with his ward officials. A convenient stage has been reached when a little stock-taking would be useful.

The register containing all the members (both new and old) should be carefully examined, and notes be made of all possible workers.

If the agent has succeeded in securing the active support of his ward officials, if the energy and initiative of the agent has caught on, the future prospects in the ward are very bright indeed.

Arrangements should be made to interview the members at their homes, for personal contact is worth a thousand circulars, however dainty the circular may be.

Invite one or two of the workers who have influence in the ward to give a night or two, urge the Councillors to come along and do their bit, and the work of personal interviews will be quickly completed.

It will often be found after a friendly chat with the member, that the barriers are broken down, and a link forged that will be useful in the future. The member may venture the remark: "I had often thought of coming and giving a lift, but thought there would be plenty of helpers without me, and that I should not be of much use if I had come."

When informed that such is not the case, that the ward has always been short of workers, he is usually surprised.

It should be made clear that all the help that can be given will be greatly appreciated, that there is ample work for all to do. Assure him that he will find kindred souls who will gladly give him the hand of fellowship — men and women who feel the rapture of a noble ideal—yet often get weary because their burdens are heavy and the helpers are few. Tell the member that the workers have many happy hours together, and maybe at the end it will be found that another has been well and truly won for the party.

Men and women are drawn to the party in many ways, and the compliment of a visit to the member will be the means of bringing new strength to the movement.

It is not suggested that every new member that is made, nor every visit that is paid will be successful. Many

visits will not give the desired results, and it may appear that good time is being wasted.

Failures here and there will happen, but the agent knew before the venture that such would be the case. At the end of the personal campaign, if it has been conducted effectively, there will have been such a goodly response as to make cheerful the most gloomy of agents.

ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES ENDORSED BY N.E.C.

8th January, 1937.

CHES.: Macclesfield.—Mr. C. T. Douthwaite, The Heys, Heys Lane, Romiley, Cheshire.

DEVON: Torquay.—Mr. Frank Scardifield, 81, Victoria Road, Dartmouth.

DURHAM: Gateshead.—Mr. Bart Kelly, "Westercraggs," View Lane, Stanley, Co. Durham.

KENT: Dover.—Mr. W. H. Bennett, Selstone, Green Lane, Whitfield, Dover, Kent; Faversham.—Mr. John Belcher, 7, Rochester Terrace, N.W.1.

LANCS.: Manchester; Withington.—Mr. Thomas Wright, 57, Victoria Road, Horwich, Lancs.

LINCS.: Lincoln.—Mr. George Deer, 5, Moorland Avenue, Lincoln.

LONDON: West Fulham.—Dr. Edith Summerskill, 1, Fitzroy Park, Highgate Village, N.6.

NORFOLK: Northern.—Mr. D. M. Fraser, 76, Church Street, Chelsea, S.W.3.

YORKS.: Halifax.—Mr. A. W. Longbottom, 19, St. Anne's Road, Skircoat Green, Halifax.

DELETION OF CANDIDATURES.

DEVON: Totnes.—Mr. W. R. Henwood.

LANCS.: Stretford.—Mr. Will Nally.

[(Continued from page 16)]

from the boxes and put aside. Every effort must be made to poll all these supporters, and helpers will be given cards to "knock up" during the day.

In the evening, all helpers will be asked to use every pressure to get out the remaining "favourables." *It is by this polling day system that a Labour vote is fully mobilised for a candidate.* If there is no such system, the helpers are rushing hither and thither, and much of their toil is of small avail when they don't know where the actual favourables are.